



THE LUFTWAFFE ON THE EASTERN FRONT

By GENERAL QUADE

Every day since the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, the communiqués of the German High Command have mentioned the exploits of the Luftwaffe on the eastern front. It is evident to everyone that the share of the Luftwaffe in the German victories of the past eighteen months has been very great. General Quade, an outstanding German author on aerial warfare, describes in the following article, written specially for "The XXth Century," the many different phases of this heroic struggle, which is unlike anything the world has ever seen in the field of war.—K.M.

HIDDEN LAND

THAT which gives the war on the eastern front its stamp is the vastness of the spaces in which it is being fought and the limited knowledge the world had of these regions. What was known were the areas which the Soviet Union had occupied in 1939 (the Baltic States and eastern Poland). But even in comparison to European Russia alone, these areas were only a narrow strip. What lay behind had been glimpsed by few foreigners since 1919. The Soviets had hermetically sealed their country and had also managed with expert skill to hide the development of their armed forces and their armament industry from foreign eyes.

Thus this war theater presented the German armed forces, including the German Air Force, with many a new task, as well as problems which it had not been necessary to solve either in Poland, Norway, France, or the Balkans.

The main purposes of the Luftwaffe were naturally the same in the war against the Soviets as they had been in the other war theaters of Europe: to gain the superiority of the air, and directly and indirectly to support the Army and—over the sea—the Navy. But distance

and terrain, as well as a bitterly and fanatically fighting enemy who was, also in the air, numerically very strong, demanded the utmost in sacrifice and the highest devotion to duty from every single man in the German Luftwaffe.

EXTRAORDINARY FIGURES

In all the other theaters of war, our pursuit and fighter squadrons had succeeded in a comparatively short time in gaining air superiority. On the eastern front it had constantly to be fought for anew in violent battles at the centers of operation. The numbers of enemy planes destroyed speak for themselves. On the first day of war, June 22, 1941, the figure was 1,811 planes, a figure which at that time seemed incredibly high to us. During the first week of attack, the number rose to 4,107; by August 12 it was 11,250; by December 10, more than 16,000; and by now the number of Soviet planes shot down in air battles and by antiaircraft artillery as well as destroyed on the ground has grown to well over 25,000.

However, more than by these figures, the absolute superiority of the German Air Force is proved by the fact that the extremely high losses of the enemy are contrasted by surprisingly low losses on our own side. Thanks to the excellent

work of its command, the German Air Force was able, in spite of frequent local inferiority in numbers, to gain the upper hand wherever the main thrusts of the Army necessitated the obtaining of air superiority above the area of attack. Fighter and Stuka squadrons destroyed the Soviet airfields in the vicinity of our areas of attack, while our pursuit squadrons, excellently supported by anti-aircraft artillery, cleared the air of the enemy.

The same squadrons have also in innumerable cases assisted the Army in attack and in defensive fighting on the battlefields themselves. They took part in the very early fighting while the border defenses were being penetrated. Then they assisted the spearheads of the armored units thrusting swiftly and deeply into enemy territory and contributed towards quickly removing strong enemy resistance. Their bombs and the fire from their cannons and machine guns struck at enemy units held in reserve and at concentrations of armored cars; they silenced batteries and destroyed pillboxes and fortifications. The anti-aircraft artillery earned special merit in support of the Army. Even the heaviest Soviet tanks have succumbed to the power of penetration of its excellently shooting guns. Far beyond its original task of fighting enemy planes, the anti-aircraft artillery has proved itself a first-class, rough-and-ready, indispensable front-line force.

ADING THE ARMY

While the heavy defensive fighting was raging on the eastern front during the exceptionally cold winter of 1941/42, the Air Force achieved outstanding successes in supporting the Army. When ice- and snowbound tracks and roads made it almost impossible to bring up reserves rapidly to threatened sectors, squadrons of the Luftwaffe, which were independent of rail and road communications, were often the only means of giving aid in time. They did this by attacks with bombs and machine guns and through their air-transport units which brought fresh troops, ammunition,

and food supplies to the front and carried back wounded, often enough under the worst possible weather conditions. On several occasions they succeeded in supplying by air cut-off and completely encircled Army units until the latter could be relieved. In the winter months especially, the Luftwaffe proved itself an excellent, swift, hard-hitting, and mobile reserve in the hands of the High Command.

The Air Force could also give valuable aid to the Army by direct means. The further our attack advanced toward the east, the more wide-meshed became the network of railways and roads. Here a rich and profitable field of activity offered itself to our planes. Railway junctions and railway stations behind the Soviet front were set on fire by our bombs, locomotives and trains were destroyed and derailed, ammunition and fuel trains blasted, and rails were torn up and made useless by countless direct hits. The traffic congestion resulting from these attacks disorganized the Soviet supply system, impeded the bringing up of men, arms, ammunition, and food supplies, destroyed valuable war material, and in this way relieved our front. Similar successes were achieved by air attacks on the few really practicable and for that reason particularly crowded highways.

PLANES WIN A BATTLE

The successful actions against enemy shipping on the Black Sea and the Caspian, the Baltic, and the Arctic Ocean, serve the same purpose. As a classic example of indirect support of the Army, we mention the destruction of the large Anglo-American convoy in the Arctic at the end of June 1942. By far the greater part of the vessels were sunk by the Luftwaffe. From cargo lists captured, we know that the destruction of this convoy entailed material losses for the enemy which for us represent the success of winning a huge battle, a battle in which not a single German soldier of the Army had to use his rifle or machine gun, in which not a single shell was fired or a single tank moved, a battle in which

the Army lost not a single soldier, either dead, wounded, or taken prisoner. The arms, tanks, planes, and ammunition sunk in the Arctic have ceased for all time to threaten German soldiers.

The reconnoitering squadrons of the Air Force have also an honorable share in the successes which the German armed forces have so far won on the eastern front. Orientation is made difficult here by inadequate maps, a monotonous terrain that, according to western European ideas, is hard to survey, and endless forests whose outlines usually do not even coincide with the map. Rural roads and rivers change their course with the seasons and according to the weather.

EYES OF THE ARMY

In spite of all these difficulties, air reconnaissance units have done excellent work. It is to their special credit that through them the Army command was always quickly informed about the course of the front and the goals reached by our troops. This was all the more important since, during the great *Kessel* battles, entire Army corps had often to fight for days with their front to the west in order to cut off the surrounded Soviet armies. Through constant observation of the railway and road network hundreds of miles into enemy territory, they were able to bring back valuable reports con-

cerning troop movements, preparations for attack, etc.

Like the crews of the flying units, the men of the ground crews, the airplane mechanics and the host of men needed for attendance and care, have done their difficult duty in burning heat and icy cold.

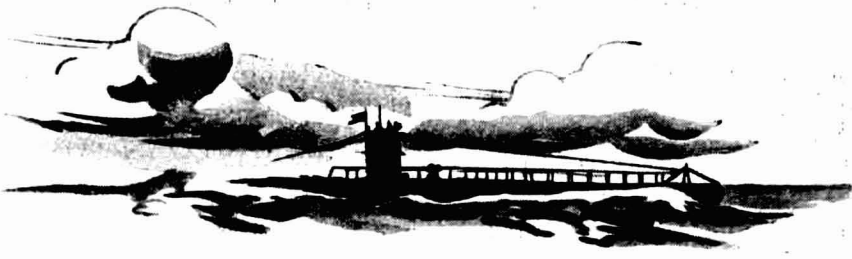
The air signal corps has been responsible for maintaining connections between command and troops, in spite of the enormous distances to be bridged.

Finally, the supply units of the Air Force have brought up, even under the most difficult road conditions, all the thousands of things on which a technical force like the Luftwaffe is dependent. In the winter months especially, they have often made possible that which seemed absolutely impossible. They have seen to it that everything that was actually needed by the Luftwaffe was really there, and that the planes were always able to start.

The German Air Force can look back with pride on its achievements during the eighteen months of war on the eastern front. The share it has had in the successes of the German armed forces on this theater of war, too, has already become a part of history. The Luftwaffe will continue to do its duty.



Upon conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, Bismarck went to Frankfurt to participate in the peace negotiations there. He was wearing civilian clothes when he arrived at the hotel. The head waiter, who was accustomed to seeing the Chancellor in uniform, expressed his surprise and said: "We almost did not recognize Your Excellency!" Bismarck laughed and replied: "Then you would have had the same trouble as the French, for they did not know who we really were until we put on our uniforms!"



SUBMARINES IN MODERN WAR

By REAR ADMIRAL LÜTZOW

There is one phase in this war on which the leaders of the Allied camp have not displayed optimism in recent months. On the contrary, they have consistently stressed the hitherto unsurmounted difficulties facing them in this phase. We refer to the unsuccessful battle of the Allies against German submarines.

In the following article, specially written for "The XXth Century," Admiral Lützow, the outstanding German naval commentator, presents his ideas on the subject.
—K.M.

THE aim of naval warfare has always been to gain supremacy over maritime connections. To keep these open for oneself and to close them for the enemy—that was the object of the struggle. In former centuries the decisions in such naval wars were always brought about in naval battles fought by fleets of warships. The victor of these battles could send out his own merchant ships and drive those of the enemy off the seas. Consequently, the proportionate strength of the various navies at the beginning of a war had an important bearing on such decisions. And since, in contrast to the land, the open seas know no obstacles of terrain, a comparison of the numbers of warships ready for action was a good standard on which to base an estimate of the ratio of strength.

These well-founded views on naval warfare were suddenly blown sky-high by the sinking of the three British armored cruisers *Hogue*, *Cressy*, and *Aboukir* by a German submarine, commanded by Otto Weddigen, on September 12, 1914. For this proved with one stroke that the submarine was able to pierce the naval supremacy of even the strongest battle fleet. Without regard for the enemy's numerical superiority, the submarine could injure his maritime communications and their protection, indeed, even destroy them, without, on the other hand, being able to ensure its own side's maritime connections.

The fact that, as a result of these experiences, the German U-boat attacks were directed from 1915 onwards, not so much against the warships of the enemy, as against his merchant fleets was brought about by the hunger blockade imposed upon Germany by Great Britain. In order to carry out this blockade, the British Admiralty kept back its Navy and carefully avoided any battle and, as far as possible, any contact with U-boats. We replied to the hunger blockade with a counterblockade by U-boats. From 1914 to 1918, Britain employed about three thousand vessels against the U-boats and fought them with depth charges, mine nets, captive balloons, airships, hydroplanes, and U-boat traps. By the introduction of the convoy system in 1917, she banished the danger to such a degree that the revolution in Germany prevented the U-boat war from taking full effect. In the autumn of 1918 there were 436 German submarines under construction.

(This figure is the largest yet revealed in this connection and, coming as it does from an eminent authority, seems to us to be of sensational significance. If, by the end of the first World War, Germany, cut off from all sources of supply and lacking a clear naval policy, was working on 436 U-boats, one can imagine what must be going on on the wharves of all Europe today, when the leaders of Germany are fully awake to the paramount importance of submarine warfare.—The Editor.)